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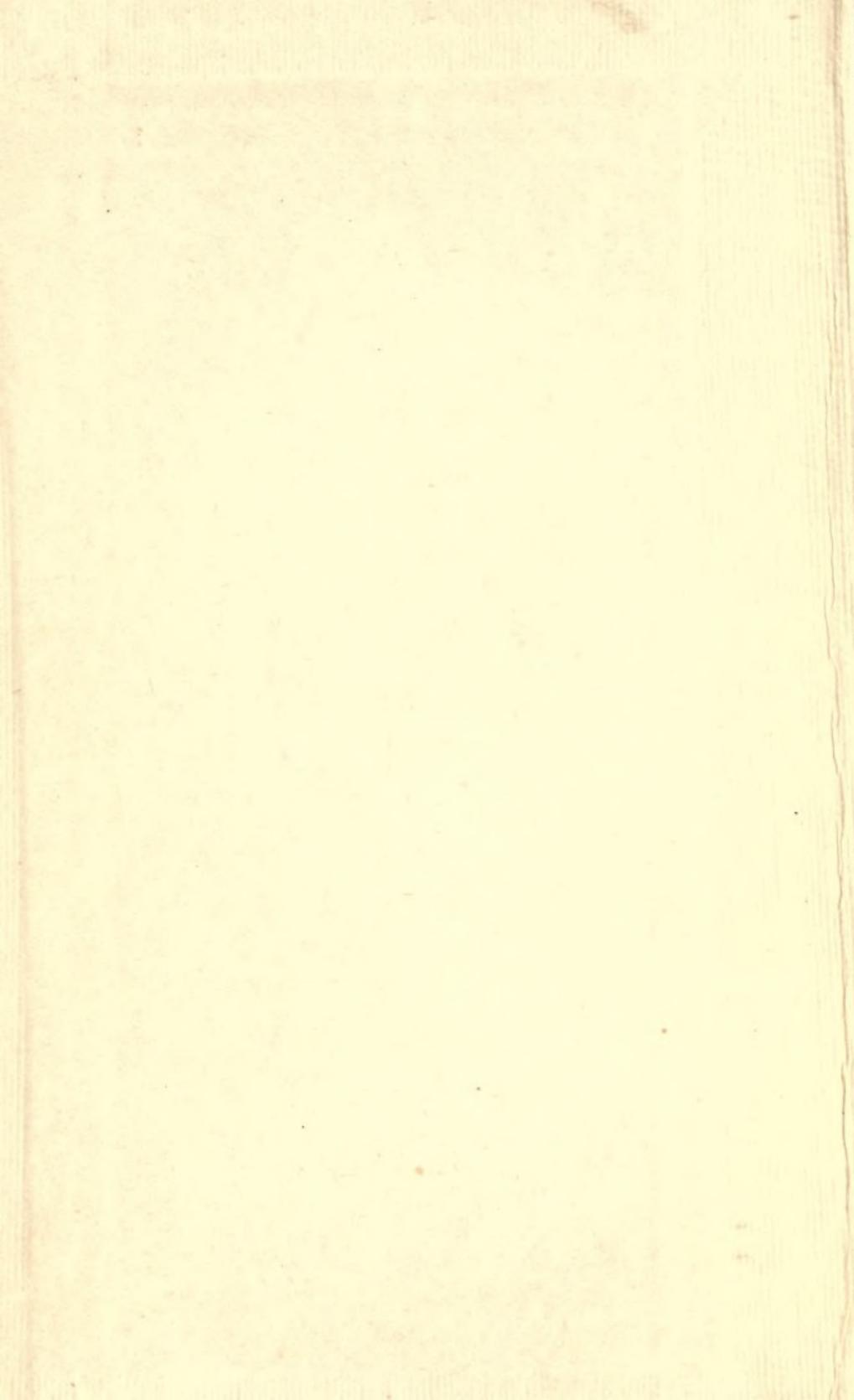
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THE SECOND  
THINGS OF LIFE

JAMES MOFFATT, D.D.



LITTLE BOOKS  
ON RELIGION



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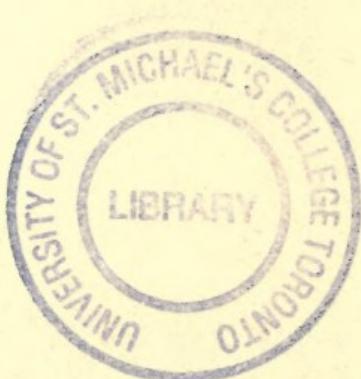


LITTLE BOOKS ON RELIGION

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THE SECOND THINGS OF LIFE



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THE SECOND  
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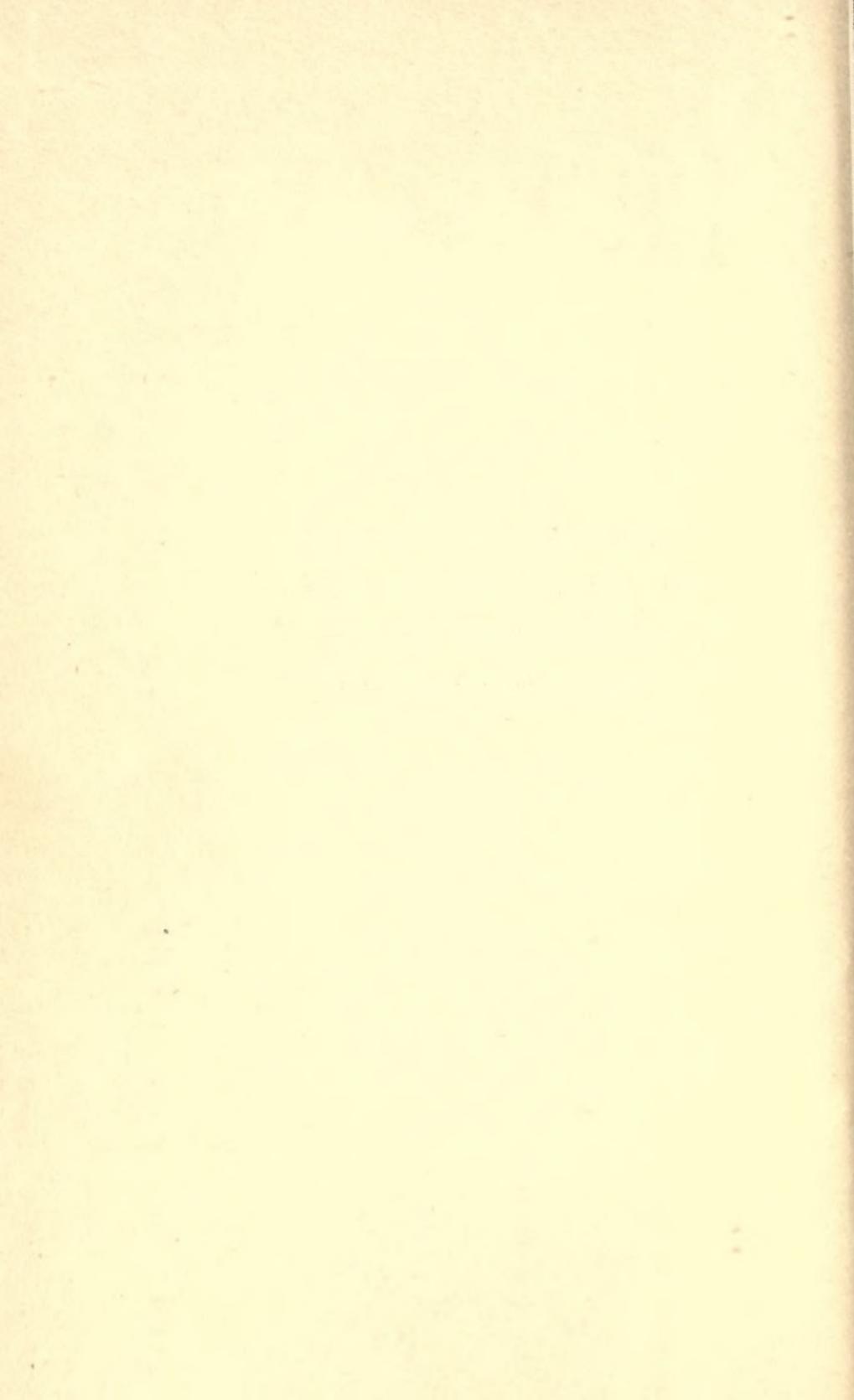
BY  
JAMES MOFFATT  
B.D., D.D.

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TO  
THE CONGREGATION OF THE  
EAST CHURCH, BROUGHTY FERRY,  
FOR WHOM THESE ADDRESSES  
WERE AT FIRST PREPARED



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## THE SECOND CHANCE

'Take Mark, and bring him with thee : for he is useful to me for ministering.'—**2 TIM.**  
**iv. 11.**

ON the shore of the bay of Naples, north of Pozzuoli, there is a ruined temple of Serapis. Only three columns survive, but they have one striking and significant characteristic. For about nine feet the marble is perforated by the borings of a marine bivalve, which can still be traced within the holes drilled into the stone. According to geologists, the reason why such marks of the sea

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appear on pillars which stand well above the present level of the Mediterranean, is that since the erection of the temple, over twenty centuries ago, the land must have sunk at some period, submerging the pillars to the depth of about twenty feet, and exposing them for a prolonged period to the ravages of the salt water. Thereafter the land must have again risen by another geological upheaval. What the modern traveller reads on the pierced surface of the columns, therefore, is the record of a subsidence and an elevation which otherwise he might never have suspected.

These casual words of Paul betray an equally striking fall and rise within the world of human character.

## THE SECOND CHANCE 3

John Mark, at an early period of his life, broke down. He made a bad start in the service of the church. He failed at a critical moment and withdrew from the Christian mission. But evidently he had recovered himself. Sixteen years lie between the earlier failure and the hour when Paul, in these words, finally restored him to favour. As with the Italian temple, so with John Mark; the fall was followed by a return to the light and air of the original position.

The second chance in life implies that the first has been missed. Mark had a fine opportunity when he was selected by his cousin and by Paul to assist them in their first mission-tour to the Roman empire, but, after the party had reached the coast of Asia

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Minor, the prospect of risky work in the interior of the country seems to have frightened the youth. Either for this reason or because he found his duties too exacting, he made his way back to Jerusalem. Mark was the son of a wealthy and prominent woman in the local church, whose house was a centre for the leaders and disciples of the new faith, and Mark must have been brought into contact with them at an impressionable period of his life. He was probably one of those impulsive, good-natured young men who let themselves be carried by generous aims further than their staying powers as yet permit. There was a vein of softness too in his character, which was probably fostered by his

sheltered surroundings. The result was that while he agreed to accompany Barnabas and Paul, probably because he felt flattered at being asked to join the mission or because the romance as well as the religion of it appealed to his ardent spirit, his nerve gave way at the first breath of serious trouble. His character was not yet formed. He had never been away from his mother's comfortable home before, and he made discreditable haste to get back to it.

This evidence of the youth's unreliable character made a painful impression on Paul's mind which it took years to erase. For a long time he refused to have anything to do with the recreant. Mark must have felt this coolness, all the more so

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that he was secretly conscious he deserved a severe reprimand. But during the interval of probation he was not idle, and his behaviour throws a good deal of light upon the stuff of which he was made. For it is true that what proves the ruin of some men is not so much their actual sins or errors as the way in which they conduct themselves after the lapse. When it is brought home to them that other people disapprove of their actions, they may turn defiant, arguing cavalierly that too much is being made of the matter. They may condone their offence or try to laugh it off. Mark plainly was too sound for that kind of behaviour. His temptation was probably not defiance but despair, not the bravado

## THE SECOND CHANCE 7

which hardens but the melancholy  
which crumbles character. He be-  
longed to the sensitive class of people  
who will brood unduly over the past,  
till they are apt to feel that they  
cannot hope to live down a scandal  
or to retrieve a false and hasty step.  
They blame themselves so acutely  
for the moment's lapse that they  
scarcely venture to expect that other  
people will ever overlook what they  
have done, and they suspect the se-  
vere criticism which they pass secretly  
upon themselves will be echoed by  
outsiders to the very end. When a  
second opportunity of service pre-  
sents itself, will not the old affair be  
brought up against them? Is not  
the record spoiled? Is there any use  
of trying to serve in the ranks again?

## 8 SECOND THINGS OF LIFE

Yet it is our duty to accept, and even to look out for such occasions of proving our better purposes. The duty is not easy. Before any temptation, we manage to persuade ourselves that yielding to it will not make any serious difference, and that we can afford to indulge ourselves with some impunity. But, after the false step has been taken, there is a danger of collapsing into the fear that we have gone too far ever to retrace our steps. In the one case we minimise the effect, in the other we exaggerate it, and there is a real risk of becoming listless, as though the mainspring of life were broken.

**3** There are serious-minded people who cripple themselves by making too much of a past offence. Their very

seriousness, their sheer sense of self-reproach, amounts to a morbid conscience which will not persuade them to give themselves a second chance. Mark took a braver and a more healthy view of life than that. The inner history of his repentance is unwritten, but from its results we can judge that he honestly tried to rise on the stepping-stones of his dead past to higher things. That was a true word of Luther, though it sounds almost like a paradox: 'If thou wilt confess sin, then have a care that thou lookest and thinkest far more on thy future life than on thy past.' Confession does force us to weigh what we have done, but once the past has been honestly faced, it must not be suffered to

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engross or depress us. Confession puts a man on his feet again, that he may try to do better, and the genuine penitent turns to the future, knowing that he has not yet forfeited a career of some usefulness to God and man, even though it may tax his pride severely to take up work again before the eyes of a public which has witnessed his previous failure.

Five or six years after his act of moral cowardice Mark had recovered his nerve and came forward to rejoin the fighting line. Having secured the forgiveness of God, he set himself pluckily to earn the forgiveness and respect of those whom he had disappointed. This time the venture seems to have proved quite a success.

Mark rehabilitated his character. He showed that he had outgrown the weakness of his earlier years, and the confidence which he had slowly learned to place in his own powers was justified. Peter welcomed him ; his cousin Barnabas held out an encouraging hand to him ; but he had still to win Paul's regard, and that took longer. Paul was one of those heroic natures who can more easily forgive a personal wrong than any disloyalty to principle or flinching before danger. In his intense jealousy for the honour of the Christian cause and ministry, he could not bear to have it discredited or endangered by treachery. He was a man who counted no personal sacrifice too costly to make on behalf of the

## 12 SECOND THINGS OF LIFE

faith, and his stringent sense of duty tempted him, like some church leaders, to be almost ruthless; it made him inclined at anyrate to be severe upon any one who failed to obey orders or to keep in step. Mark had been guilty of cowardice and treachery, and these two offences rankled in the leader's mind. Paul had put a black cross against Mark's name on his list. His confidence was neither lightly given nor lightly disturbed; once shaken, it was not readily restored. Besides, men with a keen sense of honour and an exacting conscience for duty often feel that while it may be all very well to show personal consideration to a subordinate who has once proved himself unfit or unsatisfactory, the interests

of the cause which they have at heart cannot be entrusted rashly to such a person. They are hard to satisfy, just because they have a supreme sense of responsibility. They cannot afford always to let amiable feelings or personal inclinations sway their actions. Their judgment of what are the exacting requirements of the service may incline them to impose a long probation on the offender, before they can overcome their instinctive distrust for a character which has once shown levity or a poor sense of public responsibility. We can perhaps appreciate, in this way, the motive which led Paul to hold back, when Barnabas proposed to reinstate his relative. Mark's reputation still told against him.

## 14 SECOND THINGS OF LIFE

But, as the years passed, the apostle kept his eye on the young man and noticed that his reform was genuine. Writing towards the end of his life to the Colossian church, he specially mentioned Mark as one of the few coadjutors who had proved a comfort to him in his recent work, while in these words before us he arranges for Mark to rejoin him. *He is useful to me.* This verdict marks the final reinstatement of the younger man. Once he had proved incompetent and slack, but things had changed since then, and Paul, who had been Mark's severest critic, had become his most appreciative friend. The message told Mark he was needed and trusted. What higher honour could he crave ? This leads me to say a word, in

the first place, to those who may have to give the second chance in life.

Once we are reasonably sure that a man has a genuine sense of his error and is doing his best to retrieve the position, it is our moral duty to make him feel that he has our profound encouragement and sympathy. He cannot be left alone to work his way back. The Christian office is to add our trust to his. When he is beginning to believe in himself again and to rally his powers, we ought to be extremely careful not to stand aloof or by any indication of coolness to render it more difficult for him than it should be to face the world again. Failures are sometimes due to a passing fault or to

## 16 SECOND THINGS OF LIFE

a defect which may be outgrown. It is not fair to make a single moral lapse invariably an index to real character, especially when it occurs in a man's younger and impulsive days. Bear that in mind; and this too, that there is such a thing as the power of rebound in our moral nature. The effect of a fall on some people is to produce a reaction of the whole moral life against itself. Instead of stunning the soul, it stirs every faculty into a hot effort to rise and redeem one's character. Now while discipline is discipline, while men are obliged to protect themselves and their cause against imposture, we ought, in all fairness, to keep on the outlook for any marks of this recovery in a person who has

disappointed us, and to credit him with it as soon as possible.

Tennyson sketches such treatment of a young life in his description of how King Arthur generously reinstated Edryن, the wild young knight.

Have you looked at Edryн ?  
Have ye seen how nobly changed ?  
The world will not believe a man repents ;  
And this wise world of ours is mainly right.  
Full seldom doth a man repent, or use  
Both grace and will to pluck the vicious  
quitch  
Of blood and custom wholly out of him,  
And make all clean, and plant himself afresh.  
Edryн has done it, weeding all his heart.  
I therefore make him of our Table Round,  
Not rashly, but have proved him every way,  
One of our noblest, our most valorous,  
Sanest and most obedient.

Now Mark did what Edryн did ;  
and what we are called to do is

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sometimes to give such people frank and generous credit for their attempt to live down the past. In our prudent refusal to believe that human nature can easily be changed, let us beware of thinking, or of acting as if we thought, that great moral changes are practically impossible.

A word now for those who have to get the second chance.

Think of that Italian temple. When it sank under the sea, till the ravages of marine creatures ate into the pure marble and the foul tangle gathered round its pillars, there was a force left in the world ready to raise it again into the sunlight. Is there not something corresponding to that power within the moral sphere? A lapse seems

to leave us a prey to low and dark things which eat away our strength and disfigure the comeliness of the human soul. It appears as though we had fallen hopelessly out of the clean, bright world, and disqualified ourselves for any effective service there. But a lifting power comes into play, and you must believe in it, you must have faith in the redeeming energy of God's faith in you, soiled and scarred and fallen though you may be. That power of God raises you by assuring you of His mercy, by restoring your self-respect, and by gathering round you slowly the trust of your fellow-men, until you are able to take your place in the upper, open air again. The second chance is never quite so rich

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and fresh as the first chance. I grant that. A tinge of regret will always cling to a life which has missed the glow and vigour that lie in clean beginnings and early opportunities of social and religious usefulness. But while there is that sense of a break or blot, the second chance is a great chance. It restores your vitality; it enables you to wipe out much of the past; it means that you still count for something among men and before God, and that your capacities have a niche of their very own. Now as surely as God is God, if you repent honestly, you will get this second chance. You will, indeed. God's wonderful and tenacious faith in you will find you as you are, but it will never leave you as you are.

## THE SECOND BLOW

‘ Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.’—MATT. v. 39.

THERE is a Spanish proverb that ‘ he who gives the second blow begins the quarrel.’ Jesus also throws this warning against retaliation into a proverbial form. He was fond of putting great principles vividly, without qualification or condition, in order to make His hearers think and remember. A paradox arrests the attention, and this word is shaped and coloured for that purpose. It is meant to fix in the Christian

## 22 SECOND THINGS OF LIFE

conscience the supreme duty of refusing to pay back evil in its own coin or to meet the world with its own weapons of insult and injury. If there must be a second blow, said Jesus, don't let it come from you. Don't allow ill-treatment to provoke you, upon any pretext, into an attitude of exasperation and revenge.

A blow on the cheek is seldom dangerous ; it is not even very painful, as a rule. But it is invariably a gross and deliberate insult, which in the modern as in the ancient world has been held to demand reparation, from a blow in return or an angry remonstrance to a duel. Philosophers from Socrates to Seneca held that the wise man should be too proud to take any notice of such malevolence. A second

blow, they taught, would demean the man who gave it. Jesus inaugurated a new moral epoch by introducing a higher motive for such conduct, and his prohibition of the second blow is bound up with the positive teaching of Christian love to one's enemies and opponents which dominates this section of the Sermon on the Mount. *To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, turn the other also.* These are hard words, hard to understand, and harder to obey. They do not mean that the injured party is to encourage the other to fresh evil by putting, as it were, further opportunity of mischief in his way. Only a pedant or a fanatic or a captious critic could so misconceive the thought of Jesus. His words are a graphic, Oriental

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prohibition, not only of the expression but of the very feeling of spite and exasperation which hopes to recoil upon the offender. No one can help resenting such an indignity, for while an insult is not an injury to the body it wounds our honour and our self-respect, and he would be a poor creature who did not wince under it. Jesus Himself resented injustice. But the pith and point of what He teaches here is, as Professor Denney puts it, 'That there is no limit to be laid down beforehand beyond which love is not to regulate the conduct of his disciples. No provocation can be so insulting, no demand can be so unjust, so irrational, so exasperating, as that his disciples shall be entitled to cast love overboard and meet

the world with weapons like its own.'

Notice the precise danger which Jesus has in view. It is just because the blow on the cheek is not dangerous that the resentment which it arouses is particularly apt to shoot up into a red flame of ill-will. Anger is, in its essence, a form of instinctive self-protection against injury. It does not necessarily imply malice or spite or revenge. When the injured party hits back, it is in the hope of putting a stop to any further aggression from the same quarter, and although this action may develop into quarrelling and bad temper, the quick spurt of anger is not so much a movement of retaliation as a method of natural self-protection against hurt

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or harm. But an insult is not an injury in this sense. It simply wounds our self-esteem, and therefore retaliation here is specially liable to brim over into the selfish, unreasoning passion which even first anger occasionally produces. The second blow is not the sudden, instinctive reaction of a person who finds himself in bodily danger. It is the vindictive flash of temper, which delights to see another suffer, the outburst of proud self-esteem which for the moment takes the law into its own hands and thinks of nothing but the infliction of humiliation for some personal slight. Now Jesus emphatically forbade his disciples to act in this way. *Whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other*

*also.* It is as if He had said, ‘Keep your fingers and hands under control, for they are the natural instruments of bad temper under provocation.’ Every powerful emotion tends to express itself in physical action ; love in a kiss or a clasp of the hand, anger in the striking of a blow. The law of Christ means the suppression of this physical reaction on the part of the exasperated disciple, owing to the inner suppression of the vindictive feeling which prompts it.

The words run deeper, of course, than any literal injunction or physical restraint, though certain sects have exaggerated the saying into a universal maxim which would destroy all forms of control or administration. There have been epochs, indeed, when

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the adherents of Christianity have had no redress for undeserved persecution at the hands of the authorities, and when their sole chance of coming through the ordeal was an absolutely passive resistance, a meek endurance, which sometimes produced a reaction of shame in their opponents. You have only to read autobiographies like those of Fox and Richard Weaver in order to see how, even in more recent days, a literal fulfilment of the command has occasionally enabled individuals to overcome evil by good. By actually allowing themselves to be struck, and struck repeatedly, they have softened the heart of those who heaped rude taunts and blows upon them. Probably there will always be cases in which young

people especially can exhibit self-restraint and noble gentleness by refusing to give blow for blow or taunt for taunt; they can do so, in the hope of shaming others into a better mind, and even although they may fail in that, they themselves will be initiated into the very mind of Jesus Christ.

But no literal fulfilment ever exhausts the meaning of this astonishing word for life. A moment's reflection will show that a man might conceivably let himself be insulted over and again, without necessarily being a true adherent of Jesus. In one sense it might even be argued that the anger which vents itself in a sudden blow or a hasty retort is really more healthy than the sullen

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temper which prefers to brood over an injury. With some people of a choleric nature it is a flash and a blow, and all is over. Their exasperation does not last long. Once the natural provocation is expressed, they forget about the insult, and before long they may be sorry for what they have done. The quick movement of retaliation relieves any feeling of injustice or injury in their minds, and there is no more about it. Others let an insult sink deep into the soul, till it smoulders into a sullen resentment or a chronic irritation. They don't give vent to their inclination in sharp words or deeds. But they indulge in a rancorous, sulky fit of temper, which has really worse effects upon the character than a sudden

flash of anger. They do not strike the second blow. They do not, as we say, hit back in any open and immediate fashion. But does that entitle them to be considered followers of the Christian method? No, theirs is an obedience of the letter, not of the spirit.

Jesus Himself did not obey His precept literally. When He was rudely struck on the cheek by an underling of the Jewish high priest, He did not formally turn the other cheek and incite the insolent creature to hit Him again. He gave no such provocation. He contented Himself with a quiet and dignified protest. The example is instructive, but even had it not been forthcoming, surely no sensible man would imagine for a moment that the spirit of Christ's

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vivid moral paradox could be fulfilled by a purely literal and external obedience. A man might conceivably turn the other cheek, and yet, while he was being struck again, he might be harbouring bitter resentment and wishing evil in his heart to his opponent. He might even refrain from hitting back, or from displaying any sign of irritation, owing to prudential considerations. There are various motives which keep people from retaliating; but however useful they may be in a social aspect, and however creditable they are to our unruly nature, none of them answers to that of Jesus, who bids us not only suppress our vindictiveness but show good feeling to one who has taunted or wronged us.

What, then, is the distinctively Christian motive for this heroic self-control? When and why are we called upon, as injured parties, to disclaim any policy of revenge?

Plainly the insult is assumed to be not only undeserved but personal. When some one else is struck, it is often our duty to interfere and to champion the weaker party. It is no part of Christianity to play the bystander then, and to see the strong take liberties with the weak or outrage the rights of the innocent and helpless. Jesus repeatedly showed in His own life the place of anger against cruelty and injustice and hypocrisy, and, on His showing, there are things which no man who professes to be a member of His king-

## 34 SECOND THINGS OF LIFE

dom, can afford without pusillanimity to take coolly. Unless there is a right and a duty of chivalrous and even vehement anger, the world will go to pieces. A passive protest is not always enough. Indignation must often interfere; it must expose and denounce and put down wanton invasions of human life; it must strike blow after blow until it has succeeded, by the force of public opinion, in overthrowing insolence and imposture and rampant vice within the social order. No one who shares the spirit of Jesus can stand before certain things and certain people with smooth words or folded hands. Strike he must. Apathy would be a caricature of Christian meekness in such cases. What is wanted is the noble fire of

the soul which becomes a driving force of chivalry and unselfish reform.

Even when the insult or wrong is personal it may have to be noticed and punished. Judges, authorities, teachers, and parents have all, upon certain occasions, to exhibit a proper resentment of rudeness or violence or injustice done to them in their representative capacity. Only, they will banish every trace of personal feeling from their minds. The punishment which they are bound to inflict, in the interests of the offender as well as for the sake of outraged truth and order, is vitiated by the slightest admixture of vindictiveness, even when the outrage has been done to their own persons. Their duty is to make it plain that the punishment is not a second blow

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struck out of any impulse of personal retaliation.

Furthermore, it is obvious that even when a wrong has been done to ourselves, it may have to be punished. In many cases insult and injury set in motion the powers of civil or criminal law, whether we choose or not, and no freedom from personal feeling should be allowed to prejudge the question whether it would not be for the greater good of society that unfair and unseemly conduct towards ourselves ought not to be visited with public penalties. Sometimes we can refuse to prosecute. We may judge it best to let the matter drop. But there are occasions on which a man has to put aside his private wishes and let the wrong be brought before

a court, for the sake of the general welfare, since, if he were to pass it over, it would be putting a premium on dishonesty and tyranny, as the world is now constituted. And he may let things take this legal course without striking any vindictive second blow.

These considerations really do not affect the impact of Christ's great principle upon our conscience. For what he emphasises is the personal equation. *To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek—Well, what of him? What is to be done to him?* Into any problem of conduct such as this, particularly when it bears upon our self-esteem and honour, a feeling of vindictiveness is apt to filter, and it is this which Jesus is concerned to purge out of the heart. Look at the

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endless variety of cases, private and trivial if you like, in which an insult is purely personal; that is, it neither affects the interests of anybody except ourselves, nor does it come within the scope of the law. Here the matter lies in our own hands, and we lie under the Christian law of non-retaliation, with its absolute veto upon the desire to meet the world with its own weapons and on its own ground. This is one of the most penetrating tests of our practical Christianity. It implies rare self-control and a truly magnanimous temper. As Mr. Cotter Morison once admitted from the agnostic stand-point: 'There are few tests of a man's spiritual condition more searching and decisive than the temper with

which he bears unmerited insult or railing speech. I do not refer to mere self-command, to the self-respect which forbids an answer in kind, and imposes an external calmness of manner on a swelling indignation within. The man of the world, when it suits him, can attain to this much, which yet is not little. The question is not one of self-mastery under, but of superiority to, insult, which feels no anger or resentment at insolence or contempt: and this not from any abject or craven spirit, but from living in a plane of feeling up to which personal insult does not reach.'

What meets us, as we step up to this level of Jesus, is primarily the objection that meekness, as He defines and demands it, is not a virtue

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at all ; it is simply the evidence of an abject or craven spirit, we are told, when people refuse to defend their honour by returning the blow and returning it, if possible, with interest. Well, meekness of demeanour under ill-treatment is not necessarily Christian ; it is not necessarily even a proof of moral excellence. Let us grant that freely. A man may contrive to keep himself from fretting under unfairness or injustice, and yet he may not be an admirable character morally, much less spiritually. You remember Macaulay's stinging sentences upon Bacon : ' He was very seldom, if ever, provoked into treating any person with malignity and insolence. No man more readily held up the left cheek

to those who had smitten the right. No man was more expert at the soft answer which turneth away wrath. His even temper, his flowing courtesy, the general respectability of his demeanour, made a favourable impression on those who saw him in situations which do not severely try the principles. His faults were—we write it with pain—coldness of heart and meanness of spirit. He seems to have been incapable of feeling strong affection, of facing great dangers, of making great sacrifices.' Here you have meekness, or what passes for it, combined with poor moral stuff. But the endurance of insult practised by those who act sincerely from the motives of Christ is not allied to servility, to the wrong

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kind of poverty of spirit, to any lack of self-respect, or to a defective sense of honour. They show one of the highest forms of moral strength just as they refrain from flashing out angrily at a blow or paying back evil in its own coin.

The other objection, that this attitude of non-resistance throws a gloom of negation over life, is not valid. The line of conduct enjoined by Jesus has its own high compensations. It is not all suffering, by any manner of means, for the man who declines to hit back, and by a second blow begin the quarrel, has the inner glow of self-mastery under extreme provocation and also the heroic pleasure of embracing his enemy in the higher reconciliation. He is above the

nervous struggle of asserting personal rights in a welter of jostling human atoms. A Christian man has something better to do than to live in a state of more or less suppressed feud, or to maintain a sort of border warfare against injuries and slights. Jesus has marked the dignity, the moral elevation, the manliness of passing over personal affronts. But He has also wakened in the conscience of His followers the higher capacity of cherishing a serene pity for the man who thinks he can nettle them or wound their inward peace and bliss, and this higher victory over worry and petulance is one of the fine joys known mainly to those who refuse to strike the second blow.

But to answer objections, or to feel

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that they are answered, is not the same as to start forward with a positive obedience. Tolstoy—and one can hardly speak without some reference to him on a text which he has so brilliantly and perversely illuminated—Tolstoy describes how he once read the fifth chapter of Matthew with a Jewish rabbi, who, at nearly every verse, pointed out that it occurred in the Old Testament or the Talmud. He showed Tolstoy parallels to the sayings of Jesus, which seemed remarkable anticipations. But when the two readers came to the thirty-ninth verse, the rabbi did not say, ‘This is in the Talmud.’ He turned with a quiet smile to the Russian count and asked, ‘Do the Christians keep

this commandment? Do they turn the other cheek?' Tolstoy was silenced, for at that moment he was well aware the Christian authorities of Russia, so far from turning the other cheek, were smiting their Jewish subjects upon both cheeks. Finally, to get rid of his embarrassment, the count asked, 'Is there anything like this in the Talmud?' 'No,' said the rabbi, 'there is nothing like it; but tell me, do the Christians obey this law?'

That is the wrong sort of uniqueness. There should be something like this method of non-retaliation in the character of every one who comes after Jesus and who professes to own His authority. Our life, in private as well as in public, offers

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repeated opportunities for keeping this word. We meet rudeness or injustice, the more galling sometimes on account of its pettiness and meanness; our rights are invaded, our wishes ignored or defied; we are flicked by the lash of ridicule or sarcasm, till the words sting us or the sarcastic smile makes the blood boil. People behave in a way which exasperates or nettles us. We are badly treated, our motives impugned, our actions misinterpreted, and so forth. Well, what is to be our attitude, as Christian men and women, towards these slings and arrows of injury? Jesus imposes no mechanical rule. Life is too complex for any short-and-easy solution of such practical problems.

But the spirit of our behaviour under ill-treatment is defined unambiguously in these words of our text. Jesus leaves us in no possible doubt that the spiteful, chafing temper must be cut up by the roots; there must not be the slightest attempt, nay, there ought not to be the smallest inclination, to hit back in some access of blind fury; come what may, there must be no second blow of exasperation. These are the conditions of His company. And the question is, are we prepared to try and keep them, amid the inevitable friction and provocation of human intercourse? Are we, as companions of the Lord, making any serious effort to meet this searching test of the religious character?

## THE SECOND THOUGHT

‘And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature ; because I have rejected him : . . . for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.’—1 SAM. xvi. 6, 7.

WHEN the eldest son of Jesse stepped forward, Samuel was greatly taken with his appearance. Eliab was a stalwart, handsome fellow, and in those days when a king was expected to show physical prowess in the fighting line, it was no wonder that the old prophet thought this tall,

imposing man, over thirty years old, would be a likely successor to Saul upon the throne of Israel. Besides, Eliab was the eldest son, and Orientals attached special honour to primogeniture. But, on second thoughts, Samuel hesitated. As he stood looking at Eliab he felt arrested. The impulse to select him was mysteriously checked. *The Lord said to him—such is the pious phrase for describing what we call a second thought—Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature.* Eventually the youngest boy was summoned from the fields. David, too, had an attractive appearance. He was ruddy, *a youth of fine eyes and good looks.* But there was something about him which appealed to Samuel's better

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judgment. This, he felt sure, must be the man of God's choice, and he was glad that he had reserved his decision, instead of acting hurriedly and rashly upon a first impression.

Second thoughts are not always best. In the case of a plain duty, to stop and think usually leads to casuistry. Calculation here becomes a form of secret evasion. Besides, there are generous impulses which ought to be acted upon at once, if we are to be true to ourselves. Reflection is apt to cool the spirit of determination and enterprise in such cases. Men act in emergencies or on heroic occasions practically without thinking twice about what they are doing. They are better not to think. The first impulse of help is the divine

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impulse, and there is no need, there is often no time, to wait for any confirmation of that instinct. On less heroic levels, again, it is often finer to trust the prompting of a generous instinct than to stop and think over it. If you feel strongly drawn to write a letter of congratulation or sympathy or thanks, or even to pay a visit for the same purpose, do it at once. The chances are that, if you let the days slip by, you will fail to recover the impetus that would have carried you easily and happily into action. The good resolve gets dissipated or crippled. You begin to reflect, 'Well, on second thoughts, that might be considered effusive; or, it mightn't be well received; or, it's

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past the time.' Plenty of opportunities for kindness are missed in this temper of undue caution. If there is a time to pause and reflect, there is also a time to act spontaneously, and some actions are only beautiful as they are spontaneous. Some cannot be done so aptly, and some cannot be done at all, if we begin to let scruples paralyse us.

Then, second thoughts are occasionally unnecessary. We all know people who have a faculty of rapid and almost unerring intuition; they seem able to gauge a character from a single interview or a first impression, and their estimate is usually borne out in the main by subsequent experience. There is such a thing as love at first sight and dislike at

first sight. The singular gift of penetration into character, which is one mark of a great leader, and which, in other quarters, is said by psychologists to be rather more common among women than among men, enables its possessors to dispense in many cases with any prolonged hesitation or balancing of evidence. The rapid intuition, if it does not develop self-confidence, pierces to the root and core of the matter with a single stroke.

But, on the other hand, is it not the second thought which often saves us from some error of judgment or some false step? Whenever we happen to find ourselves in Samuel's position, obliged to discriminate between one person and another, or to

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make up our minds about some course of action, there is a strong disposition to let our decision rest on superficial and hasty impressions, and it is then that the function of this arrest or plea for reflection comes into play.

There are men and women whom we take to at once. Their appearance is all in their favour. A frank bearing, physical vigour or comeliness, winning manners, and a certain brightness, often persuade us, at a first meeting, that they are exactly the sort of persons we could make friends of and rely upon. But the first impression has now and then to be revised. They are promising, but they do not wear well. The charm palls or wears off. We travel with

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them; we stay in their homes; we do business with them; and on closer acquaintance the character which we thought attractive may turn out to lack depth and consistency, till we are obliged, often with real regret, to reverse, or at any rate to modify, the enthusiastic opinion formed on our first impression of their inviting exterior.

Others take longer to reveal their quality. They may not have a prepossessing exterior; they are shy; they lack social tact and affability; they have never sacrificed to the graces or conventionalities of life. Voice, manner, and appearance may be against them. But, in our phrase, they grow upon one, and the longer we associate with them the more we

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appreciate their sterling character. Few of us, I suppose, cannot point to one or two friendships which have brought us this happy kind of surprise.

First impressions are often wrong, in short, whether they are favourable or unfavourable, whether they are of character or scenery or literature or art. Sir Joshua Reynolds admitted that, on his first visit to the Vatican galleries, he was disappointed by the sight of the great Raphaels. Macaulay owned he had never read a foreign classic, except *Dante* and *Don Quixote*, without feeling that on a first perusal it fell short of his expectations. And Carlyle sums up this experience in a well-known passage of his preface to *Wilhelm Meister*.

'If I mistake not,' he writes, 'it is with *Meister* as with every work of real and abiding excellence, the first glance is the least favourable, a picture of Raphael, a Greek statue, a play of Sophocles or Shakespeare, appears insignificant to the unpractised eye; and not until long and patient and intense examination do we begin to descry the earnest features of that beauty which has its foundation in the deepest nature of man, and will continue to be pleasing through all ages.'

One obvious reason why our antipathies and likings turn out to be erroneous or ill-founded, as a clue to character, is that they are often based on inherited prejudices or superficial impressions. We are too apt to judge

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the individual, for example, by what we know or think that we know of the class or type to which he belongs. We have ready-made labels for classifying men—national labels, religious labels, social labels, and the application of these abstract titles may prevent us from inquiring into the character of the individual and judging him on his own merits. He is expected to conform to what we imagine is the natural result of a given origin or training, and we dismiss or accept him on such grounds. Then there is the levity with which people will make up their minds about one another. It is easy to let the mind be caught by a showy, glittering, exterior. Many persons are prepared to admire offhand what flatters their

opinions or agrees with their tastes ; they have not sufficient strength of character to resist or even to scrutinise a favourable surface-impression of this kind. When Jesus sent out his disciples He told them, after they arrived at any city or village, to look out for a local man who was worthy. They were not to be so simple-minded as to take the first man who offered on his own estimate or on their own. *Search out who in it is worthy.* Real worthiness of character has often to be sought out. It is rarely discovered in a casual or haphazard fashion. The first-comer may be plausible and affable, but he does not always deserve our confidence, and it is plain prudence, not any scepticism or cynicism, which would put us on our guard

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against surrendering to first impressions.

There are homes and there are congregations which never recover altogether from an initial failure to do as Jesus advised or as Samuel did. People will choose a wife or a husband or a minister, on a first unthinking impulse, without taking sufficient time to deliberate. Brilliant, imposing qualities catch their eye; complexion, voice, and appearance carry all before them, and the choice is made before the first impression gets the benefit of the second thought with its arrest upon the unreflecting impulse. Socrates, all through life, was visited periodically by a divine leading or sign which, he said, invariably acted as a check. The

divine voice would turn him back from something he was going to do, or stop him in the act of saying something. Samuel got that negative guidance also, but he also enjoyed the positive direction which led him to choose David in preference to Eliab and the rest. And such an arrest, in the form of tact or of conscience, which will pull us up on the verge of indiscretion, is a vital factor in the right management of life.

How can we gain it, this power of discrimination? How are we to distinguish between a hasty and a wise impulse, between a superficial impression and a penetrating judgment? To this practical question no definite answer can be given. Not only are

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some characters more easy to read than others, but, as I have said, certain persons are more easily non-plussed than others, and less able to win a shrewd insight into the complex varieties of human nature. Still, whatever be our endowment in this respect, we can train ourselves to exercise a sound practical judgment within certain limits. Let me suggest two methods of this training.

In the first place, a right judgment in life implies absolute sincerity of nature. No one can hope to decide wisely who is not prepared at the outset to be thorough and disinterested. Had Samuel been inclined to flatter Jesse or himself his decision would have been liable to error. Naturally the eldest son of

the family had a prior claim to any honour. Samuel knew that ; he knew perfectly well that he would be expected to chose Eliab. But he was prepared to risk the disapproval of the family and to forfeit their good opinion by doing, if need be, what seemed unconventional. That is one element in all right judgment, whether the matter is a public appointment or a private choice. There must be grit and courage and singleness of mind, otherwise a man's perceptions get biassed, and he will often allow himself to be argued into some course of action simply because it is popular and obvious, in the line of least resistance.

Again, Samuel did not flatter himself by assuming airs. The local

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authorities received him with deference and respect; they trembled before the great man; but that did not foster any petty conceit of his own importance. He was conscious of his responsibility to God and the nation in discharging this duty. A smaller man might have been tempted to be arbitrary or consequential, and in that case his practical judgment would have been liable to be deflected.

Goodness—and by goodness I do not mean any colourless negative quality, but sincerity and singleness of mind—goodness has a wisdom of its own, an instinct for what is genuine, which is rarely deceived, though often it may be unable to give reasons for its preferences. If we keep clear of vanity and are on our guard against

prejudice, the likelihood is that we shall be fairly accurate in forming estimates of other people. When the hasty first thought or impression is defective, because it springs from an insincere or a warped judgment, the second thought of simplicity and accuracy must come in to correct it.

But even good intentions will not ensure sagacity. A well-meaning man may be deceived by appearances and make egregious mistakes, unless his sincerity of character can draw upon resources of experience. That is the second school of training for a right judgment in the affairs and intercourse of life. Samuel had been disappointed in Saul. His first impressions of the youth were favourable, but the young monarch developed

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uglier traits of character, and the revelation of this was a lesson to the prophet. It taught him to be wary about making up his mind, especially when so much depended on his choice.

Many people learn wisdom in such painful and salutary ways. They are schooled into reflection and prudence by some experience of the mischief which distils from decisions made hastily and rapidly. Only, a wider discipline is needed than the red signals of warning can supply. Experience, it is true, cannot be manufactured. Yet it may be supplied in part by study or reading or observation, all of which help to enrich the mind for the task of weighing evidence properly and taking all the factors of the case into account. The materials

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for that discipline lie in history, if not in our own experience. Some of you will recollect how, in *The Ring and the Book*, Browning gives a fine example of recourse to this resource, when he is describing the character of Pope Innocent XII. The old Pope is called upon to pronounce the final decision upon Guido, after the case has been discussed and debated by the ablest legal intellects of Rome. He has the evidence laid before him. And how does he prepare himself for so delicate and responsible a task as that of disengaging fact from fiction and truth from masses of conflicting testimony? He begins, says Browning, by taking down a volume which described the history of his predecessors. He reads page after page

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to find how they acted in the seat  
and hour of judgment.

'Being about to judge, as now, I seek  
How judged once, well or ill, some other  
Pope ;  
Study some signal judgment that subsists  
To blaze on, or else blot, the page . . .  
So, do I find example, rule of life ;  
So square and set in order the next page.'

After storing his mind with the relevant witness of history, he addresses himself to the duty lying before him.

History, biography, and even good fiction will often enable us to mature our judgment and to hold back from hasty verdicts or ill-informed decisions. God provides us with such means of reinforcing our powers of insight and discrimination. They

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afford us more than a mere knowledge of the world. What we learn from them, if we are patient and keen, is a divine distrust of appearances and a readiness to let the second thoughts of life reveal not the surface but the reality underneath.

## THE SECOND WAVE

‘And while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came.’—MATT. xxvi. 47.

I TAKE the title of this address from a stanza of Matthew Arnold. He is describing the aimlessness and unrest of modern life which leave us so little opportunity or even inclination for composure. The one chance of strength is to avoid feverishness and disturbance, but we—the poet sings—

‘But we, brought forth and rear’d in hours  
Of change, alarm, surprise—  
What shelter to grow ripe is ours ?  
What leisure to grow wise ?

Like children bathing on the shore,  
Buried a wave beneath,  
The second wave succeeds, before  
We have had time to breathe.'

The second wave means one thing coming on the top of another. It is obvious that this experience is often due to our own fault. We have no business to be on some shores, or at least to be there so often and so long. People lay themselves open in a variety of ways to a needless amount of distraction and excitement, and it is themselves rather than their age that they should blame for the unsteadiness and unsettlement which ensue. No one can expose himself to a whirl of dissipation with impunity. His character is sure to suffer in dignity and depth and self-

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control. He must be resolute enough to withdraw from the frothy, noisy ways of life which are in vogue to-day, where one thing drives another out of mind, where the passion for novelty or sensation or display leaves a man with no leisure to call his soul his own, and where one good impression is washed out rapidly by some surge of random interests. We have no business on the shore where the second wave of excitement catches and confuses us.

But there is a second wave which finds us on a beach where we have business. For example, certain forms of occupation involve repeated interruptions and demands which may be sprung upon a person without warning. There are callings in life

which expose men and women to heavy responsibilities and open up into widely ramified issues. But the special form of this complex discipline which the words of the text suggest, is that of trouble. We have a proverb that misfortunes never come singly, and it is far from uncommon to be overwhelmed by one trouble or misfortune just as we are in the act of grappling with another. When one hardship breaks upon life, people cherish a persistent hope that it will be the last for a while, as if, like jurymen, they had earned a kind of temporary exemption from such interferences with the normal cause of things. But God gives no such guarantee of any halcyon days. There is a consent of the deeper

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places in experience to the truth that

‘The second wave succeeds, before  
We have had time to breathe.’

We know how people get struck first on one side and then on another. Some, as we say, never seem to get out of the wood. Before they have had time to recover themselves after one misfortune, or to adjust themselves to the new situation, another hardship may be upon them, flinging them down and holding them down.

Jesus had just realised that His disciples were too immature and weak to enter into His feelings at the crisis of Gethsemane. Even His intimates had fallen asleep, though He asked them to share His vigil. They had failed Him at the crucial

moment. He had leant on their sympathy in vain, and the disappointment was keen. Then, just as this cold wave had surged over Him, a fresh wave broke. He had hardly finished speaking to the eleven disciples, as they sat up ashamed of their sleepiness, the words of poignant remonstrance had not left His lips, when footsteps were heard in the garden, and He looked round to see Judas moving forward to carry out the plot against his Master's life. That was the second wave in this sea of troubles. Jesus had not time to recover from the shock of discovering that the eleven were feeble, when He had to face the relentless treachery upon the part of the twelfth member of His party. Judas had not been

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asleep. In an instant the Lord realised how incompetent good people can be and how well-organised mischief can be. The treachery of Judas was no surprise to Him, for He had known some time ago what was passing in the traitor's mind; but even though a trouble is expected, it is none the less sharp when it does come, and what lent special bitterness to this trial was the fact that it fell upon Him just at the moment when His sensitive spirit was sore over the failure of His friends. The determination of the traitor made Jesus feel the incapacity and dulness of the loyalists more acutely than ever. Taken singly, each experience would have had its own sting, but the conjunction of the two meant sorrow

upon sorrow. There was no interval between them in which to gain breath. From the heavy, dull faces of the eleven, as they lay on the grass under the olive-trees, Jesus looked up to catch the glint of hard, evil purpose on the eager face of Judas.

Sometimes the second wave is spared us. It threatens to roll up, till we can almost see its foaming crest poised over us, but it sinks harmless or sweeps by without bursting into our life. Many people have been able to say with Paul: *God had mercy on me that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow.* They knew what it means to have been spared a calamity which seemed impending, at some moment when life

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was already struggling in a sea of troubles.

But even when the second wave is permitted to fall, it does not mean that God has ceased to be merciful or that He is overtaxing our strength. Men and women have occasionally to get through a double crisis, and they have often got through, without losing faith or courage, as Jesus their Lord did in Gethsemane. Now the question for us is, what are we to say about such crises, and to do about them?

Well even here there is a dispensation of mercy. Many people who are competent to speak upon the subject, out of a prolonged experience of the shore, would probably argue that it is better on the whole to have the

troubles of life in clusters and the pleasures singly. They would be disposed to agree that the joys and successes should arrive with an interval between them, so that the full good of each can be tasted at leisure, and they would also admit, in all likelihood, that troubles sometimes weigh more heavily upon the mind if they come apart than when they gather almost simultaneously.

For one thing, we are prepared to some extent by the first wave for the onset of the second. The latter may be very different from what went before; it may even be quite unexpected. But it finds life in the temper and attitude of endurance.

Thus Jesus in Gethsemane had won by intense prayer a peace of soul and

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a conviction of the Father's goodwill, which enabled Him not only to bear up against the defection of the eleven disciples, but to undergo the further trial of treachery upon the part of Judas. His soul was already in training for the discipline of the second wave, and the courageous faith which He had summoned, under the stress of the former disappointment, proved more than equal to the fresh emergency.

There may be little or no connection between the first trouble and the second; they may be, and in many cases they are, entirely different in character—one may be mental and the other physical, one public and the other private. But there is this moral connection be-

tween them that the same powers of resolute endurance, the same resources of faith and calmness and submission to the will of God, are needed to meet the brunt of both. While the particular methods vary, the impact of the first trouble puts life on its guard. We may be unprepared for the precise quarter or shape in which a second mishap will start up; we may have no presentiment of any such trouble at all; but the point is that our faculties are on the alert anyhow. They have not had time to grow relaxed. If the first shock of adversity has done its work, it will have sent us to prayer. We are awakened to a sense of reverence and awe before the mystery of life as God orders it in this world,

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and roused from the careless habits into which we slip so easily when nothing happens to cross our wishes or disturb our plans. Well, all that goes to the preparation of the soul against a second wave.

Then there is also the fact that a twofold trouble divides our attention. ‘One pain is lessened by another’s anguish.’ Mercifully, there are limits to the power of feeling pain. When several evils accumulate, or when two different blows fall in rapid succession, we may be so dazed and taken aback that we do not feel both together much more acutely than we should have felt either of them singly. When the first wave is heavier than the second, the heart is so overwhelmed by it that the

pressure of any fresh trouble is comparatively light. We may be stunned or preoccupied to such an extent by the initial grief that the impact of a second seems less severe than it would at another time. Again, if the second wave is heavier, it may drive the former almost out of mind, and prevent us from brooding over it as otherwise we might be prone to do. It is not special pleading to argue that an accumulation of misfortunes may not be in every case an unmixed calamity. The one distracts us from the other. We are less likely to sink under the sea of troubles than if we had only one trial with which to cope. It may seem cruel enough to be hurried from one side of life to another by

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successive onsets of distress. Nothing, you say, could be worse than that. But you might be worse off if you had simply a single care and if you allowed it to bulk largely in your mind. Southey was in a wise mood when he wrote, ‘Better a disturbed grief than a settled one. I at least should choose (if there were the power of choosing) to have my sorrows come thick and threefold, and my pleasures one by one.’ We have no option in the matter, of course. All we can do is to adjust ourselves to God’s discipline as it comes. But let us take that discipline sensibly and bravely. It is not without its compensations if we accept it as God means it to be accepted, the second wave no less than the first

within the limits of His will for us.

Some natures, it is true, are less capable than others of rising to the occasion when a variety of evils is upon them. One trouble they can make a shift to meet. But when one is closely followed up by another, they lose their heads; they are more easily thrown off their balance than others who manage to keep resourceful and self-possessed under a repeated stress of misfortunes.

Then there are cases in which the two trials are of so opposite a character that they seem to aggravate instead of alleviating the tension and confusion of the situation. For example, a man may be suddenly confronted with some business anxiety which

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requires his undivided attention ; and at that very moment he may go home some evening to find that serious illness has broken out in his family. Or a bereavement in the household may be followed by the news of disgrace to a son abroad. Or when some one on whom we leant has disappointed our confidence, and our nature is still quivering under the shock of misplaced trust, we may get an anonymous letter or have a public attack sprung on us. Or, yet again, a crisis of religious doubt may coincide with some uncertainty in our affairs.

There is no beach of life which lies altogether beyond these great, cold waves—billows of God that go over our heads and leave us almost at our

wits' end, breathless and dazed under the successive shocks of trouble. Life may look fairly calm to us at present. We saunter along its shore without any misgiving or presentiment. But which of us can tell from what quarter we may be struck out of the deep, and perhaps struck again, just when we are quivering with distress and alarm under the onset of the first wave? There is nothing for it, in the rough time, but to hold to our supreme resource—that steady faith in God's presence and purpose, which is nourished by prayer. We must see shore and wave alike as part of the Father's will. For the second compensation of which we have been speaking really depends upon the first. When you have to take up

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arms against a sea of troubles, which threaten to blind you with their spray and rob you of your very senses, you will not be overwhelmed by the second wave, provided that you have already set yourself, like Jesus, to meet the first wave on the near and the sure footing of earnest prayer.

## THE SECOND PLACE

‘And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. . . . And they gave lots for them; and the lot fell upon Matthias.’—ACTS i. 23, 26.

THE prayer for divine guidance was over. Two small tablets, each bearing the name of a candidate, were placed in an urn, which was rapidly shaken, and with intense excitement the company watched curiously to see which would fall out. Presently one dropped on the floor. Amid breathless suspense it was picked up and read. The name of the new apostle was Matthias!

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*The lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.* The lot fell on him, and the curtain fell on him. He is never heard of afterwards. It has been generally supposed that his obscurity meant a silent censure of God upon the hasty and superstitious way in which the vacancy was filled up. But, however this may be, we cannot help feeling more interested in Justus than in Matthias. We wonder how he took his defeat. History does nothing to satisfy our curiosity or whet our imagination on this point, for we know as little about Justus as we do about his successful rival; but most of us know at some time or in some way what it means to be assigned the second place in life. And that

was the ordeal of Justus. He was passed over, and passed over publicly. A disappointment which is private, or known only to one or two friends, is easier to bear than a public defeat, after which a man has to face not only the curious gaze of the unsympathetic, but the condolence and sympathy of well-meaning friends; these may aggravate the disappointment and enhance the difficulty of the situation, for they prevent him from forgetting about it as quickly as he would like and as he should.

If Justus had been originally a disciple of John the Baptist, as is quite probable, the magnanimity of his master may have helped him to accept the situation bravely. The least member of the divine kingdom

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may have been greater than John, but John, by his behaviour towards Jesus, showed that in one point at anyrate his soul was greater than many who had a fuller position of religious privilege. *He must increase, but I must decrease.* This my joy therefore is fulfilled. The man who could say that had purged his nature from every atom of self-importance or conceit, and it is to be hoped that Justus was heroic enough to rise to the same level of generosity. If he did rise to it, he must have conquered jealousy and rancour in his relations with Matthias and the rest, and that was no trivial victory. There is no jealousy like professional jealousy. From admirals to evangelists, it has a malign power of inter-

rupting the co-operation of those who are called to work side by side in a common service. It is no disgrace, it is not even much of a trial, to be passed over in favour of some one who is conspicuously distinguished or who has pre-eminent claims to a position. The ordeal comes when we are thrown into rivalry with our equals. And that was the discipline of Justus Barsabbas. Both he and Matthias had the same qualifications and experience. Out of the numerous disciples who had belonged to the original fellowship of Jesus, these two men were nominated by common consent as specially fitted for the vacant post. It is even possible that as Justus is mentioned first, and as his names are fully given, he was the

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older and more important of the two. But evidently there was so little to choose between them that their companions resolved to leave the selection to the hazard of the lot instead of voting upon their names. *And the lot fell on Matthias.* Matthias got the coveted position. What Justus Barsabbas got was the opportunity of the second place, the opportunity of showing the magnanimity that was in him, upon one of those trying emergencies which reveal how far a man is capable of forgetting himself and of subordinating his personal ambitions in order to rejoice in the superiority of others and in the common good.

The conviction that the second place is our lot does not always come

home to us with such dramatic suddenness. It often breaks slowly upon the mind. It is not an experience of youth, for although we get our defeats and disappointments in the early days, and although rebuffs seem crushing at the time, still life is in the making, and the spirits are naturally buoyant. A change comes as we approach and enter middle age. People look around them, to find, on comparing their position with that of their contemporaries, that they are not likely ever to attain the front rank or even the position which at one time it seemed reasonable to expect that they might achieve. It breaks on them that they lack sufficient force of character or energy of mind. They awaken to the profound

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difference between talent and genius, or between first-rate ability and second-rate activity. They realise that the world has taken their measure and assigned them their niche, and the consciousness of this leads them to take a more sober estimate of their own powers; they face the unwelcome admission that beyond certain limits it is practically impossible for them to go, and that their success, such as it is, will be of the second order. No one admits that to himself without a secret pang of disappointment or even resentment. We don't care to allow that our capacities did not warrant the high hopes with which we started, whether these hopes related to professional standing or personal success of any

kind. But when we cannot shut our eyes to the situation any longer, it becomes an opportunity for showing the spirit and stuff we are made of. The sensitive nature is tempted by self-pity to let itself be drawn down into melancholy. The stronger nature is apt to show its fibre by an attitude of umbrage to the world. Between these two extremes, the sterling soul will continue to hold on its way, with the cheery, half-humorous confession :

‘In me there dwells  
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch  
Of greatness to know well I am not great.’

It is quite possible to say that plaintively. But the wise course is to say it frankly to oneself, without a tinge of weak self-pity or of crude defiance.

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There are some plausible consolations which we must refuse at all costs in the second place. One is, disparagement of the first place. Success, no doubt, has its own penalties, and a high place is rarely a bed of roses, but it is a poor business for the unsuccessful to try to extract alleviations from such acid reflections. The second place has ample compensations of its own. You can and you should enjoy these without belittling the honour and opportunities of the first place. Another trick of our wounded self-love is to disparage those who have been promoted over our heads, by insinuating that while they may be superior in fortune and influence and popularity, they are deficient in other qualities in which,

the inference is, we ourselves are strong. This is a miserable habit into which to fall. It means that we grudge them their good luck, and that we are trying to drag them down by reflecting on their deficiencies. A third form of pique is to work hard, in the perverse hope of showing people how foolish they were to pass us over. This is to make our envy a sort of motive for new energy. It is at least better than sulking with folded hands, but it betrays the mean ambition to prove some day that a gross mistake has been made in ignoring our abilities and qualifications.

Every temper of this kind springs from sullenness or bad humour at bottom, and that is the lurking

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temptation of being assigned the second place in life. The discipline of a competition or election forces us not only to think about ourselves for the time being but to compare ourselves with other people, and if there is any secret bitterness in our nature it is sure to come to the surface then. The fact is, the discipline of disappointment in any shape or form is a test of the reality of character. Some who are too strong or too proud to let any expression of exasperation escape their lips will often assume a composure which is unnatural. They have too much self-respect to betray their feelings, even privately. They will resent the slightest mark of sympathy, till you feel that it would be almost an insult to condole with

them on the subject. When the matter has to be mentioned, they will pose as if they really did not care one way or another. On its lower levels, that affectation lies open to the charge of 'sour grapes.' Other people know that the man in question did care, far more than he will allow, and that his protestations of serene indifference or nonchalance are not real. But, even on an upper level, any one who has had to take the second place may, out of sheer stoicism, affect a calm which he does not feel, and which his friends shrewdly suspect that in his heart of hearts he does not feel. It is on all accounts better to be natural and to confess that one is made of flesh and blood like the rest of the race. After all, it is no

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discredit to bleed when one is pricked in an honourable struggle. The discreditable thing is to parade one's wounds or to whine under them weakly. It is discreditable and too common. That is why we cannot help admiring the man who, after some rebuff or defeat, in which no personal disgrace attached to him, accepts the situation manfully, neither giving way to the irritation of wounded self-esteem nor pretending loftily that nothing of any consequence has happened, but bestirring himself to take the discipline naturally and sweetly.

How does he do it? Mainly by realising, as any sensible and religious soul can do, if he chooses, that even the second place is an honour. To serve God in any place is an honour.

Justus had been a disciple of Jesus from the beginning. He had received a training which many in the early church had not been privileged to enjoy. He could speak of Jesus from personal knowledge as one whom he had both seen and loved. He might not have the position which he coveted among the twelve apostles, but he had a great vocation nevertheless, and the probability is that he set himself down, like a humble and heroic soul, to persevere with his calling, just as if nothing had occurred to fire his ambition. The dream of a high place had come to him unexpectedly. It had broken. But the business of his life remained. Faith and discipleship were not a dream, and there down among the unbroken

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relationships and responsibilities of the second place, God was still waiting for him. Irksome as it might be to adjust himself to these, after being on tip-toe for the higher vocation, the sense of duty as God's will would soon remove any feeling of distaste or lingering regret.

The call is to go on with the old work as thoroughly and contentedly as possible. But that requires some nerve and grit. There are people who seem never to recover from the ordeal of having been passed over. They never quite forget it. The discipline unsettles them. Either they become soured and aggrieved, or else, if they agree to pursue the old tasks, it is with an air of listlessness and detachment, which is often

accompanied by a secret contempt for their vocation which they are not always at pains to conceal. They are convinced they were meant for better things or for a more responsible and honourable position than has been assigned to them. Perhaps they were. But to cherish such fretful feelings is worse than folly. It is mischief and misery. It is an ignoble superiority. Why can't they see, as every one else does, that it is bound to spoil their effectiveness no less than their peace of mind? For while God can do a great deal of first-rate work by means of second-rate men and women who are wise enough to be content with subordinate posts, a soured nature, even though its materials are first-class, is

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useless to Him, and useless for the simple reason that it has become egotistical at the core. People who pose as injured martyrs and victims of circumstances, and who dilate on the ingratitude or injustice of the world, are never popular figures. They are very sorry for themselves and they want you to be sorry for them, but, even though you are, you prefer to reserve your sympathy for those who are not voluble or plaintive. Such people exclude themselves from the simple affections and activities of life and also from the best service of God, just because they put themselves out of tune. Their discouragement is, in the last analysis, a symptom of wounded pride. If they only could realise it, their petul-

ance proves that their own reputation is put before the interests of the God whom they profess to serve. It is absurd to think that, since a first place has been denied us, we are really too good for any lower duty. The motto, 'Cæsar or nobody,' has been the favourite of many people, distinguished and second-rate, notably of a man like Cardinal Manning, but it has no currency within the kingdom of God. It does not show high spirit, it is merely silly and selfish to consider ourselves above the duties of the second place, simply because we have evidently not been thought worthy of the first, or to behave as though we alone should be allowed to conceive and execute and arrange things apart from the co-

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operation of others, apart even from the subordination of our private hopes and aims to the greater good.

Fortunately, the discipline of the second place is more bravely borne by many. Their nature is cast in larger moulds. They are alive to the need of keeping a strict watch on that dangerous border-line between legitimate ambition and selfish craving. They school themselves to think of the cause more than of their personal interests, and because they are strong and sensible enough to see that the habit of dwelling on mortifications only intensifies them, they refuse to insinuate any sentimental plea, in word or look, for sympathy. What they believe in supremely is the justice and wisdom

of the Lord whom they have undertaken to serve. The result is that they decline to take offence when others are promoted over their heads or when their services are eclipsed by any of their contemporaries.

Perhaps no one has put this more admirably than Sir William Rowan Hamilton in one of his sonnets—

'O brooding Spirit of Wisdom and of Love,  
Whose mighty wings even now o'ershadow  
    me ;  
Absorb me in thine own immensity,  
And raise me far my finite self above !  
Purge vanity away and the weak care  
That name or fame of me should widely  
    spread ;  
And the deep wish keep burning in their stead  
Thy blissful influence afar to bear,  
Or see it borne ! Let no desire of ease,  
No lack of courage, faith, or love, delay  
My own steps in that high thought-paven  
    way,

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In which my soul her clear commission sees :  
Yet with an equal joy let me behold  
Thy chariot o'er that way by others roll'd.'

Wordsworth once said he had only met two men in his life to whom he would apply the term 'wonderful.' One was Coleridge, of course, and the other Sir William Rowan Hamilton. Sir William had gifts which explain the praise of Wordsworth. But, I think, we may add that this sonnet, with its note of unselfish chivalry and absorption in the highest, could only have been written by a wonderful man; it is always wonderful to find a man who is not only distinguished for his intellect and character but above the darts of vanity, a man who can rejoice magnanimously in the

achievements of his contemporaries and witness their success without a twinge of soreness or ungenerous chagrin.

It is not easy, I confess, to speak about the second place in life without becoming either sentimental or apparently unsympathetic. There are young people in every congregation who know next to nothing about it, and who secretly expect that they never will. Others know it only too well. They are in the second place ; they've been a long time there, and it looks as if some of them would be there to the end of the chapter. Every word you say to them about the temptation and trials of it is like a touch upon some inner wound, which throbs and throbs, though

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they keep a brave face to the outside world. They don't need any preacher to tell them what it means to see the lot fall on the man or woman next them. But partly for their sakes and partly for the sake of those who may have to face this ordeal in any shape or form, at some turn in their life, let me say this. The second place may not be the place we had confidently expected, but it is a place of God. Whether we have been consigned to it by what seems as much a matter of luck or chance as the throwing of a lot, the sound policy is: never go back on the past, never harp on it with melancholy or irritation, but make the most of such opportunities as God will open up for those who loyally serve where it has

pleased Him to put them or to leave them. God must be over the decisions that assign the second place as well as the first. The toss of the lot, a mistaken choice in one's profession or in marriage, lack of influence or of proper training, a breakdown in health, a bereavement which imposes unlooked-for responsibilities, or an error in judgment—any of these apparently godless accidents may relegate a man to some backwater, from which he can see more favoured people pressing forward with the wind and current behind them. It is an experience which searches our nature to the quick. It stirs deep feelings. But let us see that it is not allowed to stir any bitterness towards those who outstrip us, or any suspicions

about God. The lot may fall on Matthias. But Justus got his lot also from his Lord. Justus is the unofficial apostle of all who are put into the second place in life, of the commonplace natures who come very near distinction but miss it, of the disappointed, of the men and women who, in our phrase, never seem to get their right place in this world. The lot falls. Popularity, happiness, success, health, outlets for energy; these fall to this one and to that. But there's always some one being passed over; we don't see why, they don't see why. You meet people who have to put up with what is obviously for them the second best—excellent, deserving souls who remind you of Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada: *He*

*was more honourable than the thirty,  
howbeit he attained not to the first  
three.* A man who fares thus, if he  
is of a healthy nature, will accept his  
second rank from the hands of God  
and do his best, cheerfully and con-  
scientiously, to keep the flag flying  
over his lonely outpost. He will not  
throw up his commission. He will  
not sulk or whine. He will say, ‘It  
pleased God, and it must please  
me.’

‘It was the only hope I had  
That unto near fulfilment grew ;  
A while it made me very glad,  
A while it made me very sad ;  
And then I knew  
’Twas but another thread He wove  
In the mixed web of Father-love.’

I do not know if Justus Barsabbas  
took his disappointment in that

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spirit. I hope he did. But I am sure this is the way in which God means any of us to behave who may be called to the discipline of accepting from His hand for a time or to the end the second place in life.

## THE SECOND WATCH

‘Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching. . . . And if he shall come in the second watch . . . and find them so, blessed are those servants.’  
—LUKE xii. 37, 38.

DURING the first watch, from six o’clock to ten, the ordinary occupations of the evening went on, as in this parable the wedding feast at which the master of the house was absent. The first half of it, at any-rate, was a fairly stirring time, when the brisk intercourse and avocations of men had not yet died away. No special strain attached to the first

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watch upon the whole. Even the third watch was partly relieved by the dawn. The most trying period was probably the second watch, from ten at night to two in the morning, when sleep was most likely to press heavily on the eyelids, during these dragging, cold hours in the dead of night. Noises were hushed in the streets. The day's work began to tell upon the watchers. Drowsiness became more and more overpowering, and a real test fell upon obedience and alertness. In warfare it was the favourite time for surprising the enemy by a night attack. In ordinary life, says Jesus, the master of the house may return then. He may find his servants indoors, but can he depend upon them being

awake and ready to receive Him? If so, blessed are those servants. Twice over Jesus repeats the phrase. *Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching. . . . And if he shall come in the second watch and find them so, blessed are those servants.* It is as though this spirit of persistent fidelity and self-denial were singled out as exceptionally rare. Jesus had just told the disciples, *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* If their minds and hearts were really in their work, he continues, they would be setting their Lord's interests above their own; even in the dead of night, when it was hardest to keep awake, with no outward stimulus, with little

or nothing to remind them of their duty to Him, they would be showing their devotion by behaving as those who lived for more than could be seen, and who were thinking constantly and chiefly of what their Lord had a right to expect from them. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return from the marriage-feast; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open to him.*

The primitive Christians were tempted by their belief in the near advent of Jesus, either to be excited and feverish, as if the crisis were imminent, or to grow presumptuous and careless, as if it were a remote

contingency which justified them meanwhile in taking things easy. These words of Jesus are addressed to the latter danger. They bear upon the sense of false security which assumes that because nothing has happened as yet, nothing is likely to happen in the immediate future. ‘The sense of security,’ George Eliot once wrote, ‘springs from habit rather than from conviction, and for this reason it often subsists after such a change in the conditions as might have been expected to suggest alarm. The lapse of time during which a given event has not happened, is, in this logic of habit, constantly alleged as a reason why the event should never happen, even when the lapse of time

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is precisely the added condition which makes the event imminent.' For ourselves, though the form of this duty of watchfulness has altered, the spirit of it remains. The religious significance of that ardent belief in the second coming of Jesus which controlled the early church lay in the fact that it expressed vividly the entire dependence of the Christian situation upon the person and will of Jesus Christ. The destiny of the Christian was bound up with Him; the rule of the Christian life did not lie in natural inclinations or expectations. And this is the permanent message of such parables and sayings. *What I say to you I say to all, Watch.* However little there may be in our circumstances

or surroundings to suggest the authority of our Lord, the genuine disciple should require nothing to remind him of that control or to bind him to it with a persistent and unwearied devotion. Whether there are obvious signs of it or not, he must be alive to it from hour to hour. The sense that he is not his own, that his religious life is not an experience which is a whim or an outcome of personal feeling, but is under the oversight and authority of the Lord — this permeates his entire outlook, consciously or unconsciously, determining his motives and shaping his conduct, when he is tempted to flag or to acquiesce in some easier habit of the soul. Jesus is Lord. It is Jesus who alone has

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the right to say what we are to do or stand. His lordship explains our position in this world, including the difference between what others can indulge in and what our conscience will not permit us to enjoy. When all is said and done, we belong to Him. We have no right to act or think as if we were independent or as if we could afford to take our cue from natural impulses or our conventional environment. Then, as now, the plausible temptation was to estimate life by appearances. In every age people can forecast, as they think, what is likely to happen within certain limits; from observation and experience they consider themselves pretty good judges of how things will go and in what

way the moral processes of life will be worked out in their own case. To some extent this is reasonable enough. There are general lines of providence which only the dull and stupid can miss; the will of God is manifested repeatedly to the sagacity and insight of those who have eyes to see. But this kind of foresight may readily degenerate into moral presumption, and it does so whenever we slip into the habit of reasoning that life can be gauged beforehand with such accuracy as to relieve us at certain periods from the sense of entire dependence upon the will of God. *Be like men who look for their lord.* That is the method prescribed by Jesus for the regulation of the Christian life. No amount of

experience, no security of circumstances, no promising outlook, no capacity or sagacity, must ever be allowed to slacken our obligation to the unseen Lord or to affect our recognition of His authority. His counsels and plans are His own, and they do not always square with our calculations or—for the matter of that—with our tastes. If they did, the growth of life would be arrested, for it is just this element of uncertainty which constitutes a large part of our moral discipline. Had we some calendar of providence, by means of which we could reckon beforehand when the great issues and visitations of life would occur, when we would require to be on our guard and when no demand

would be made, it would weaken our sense of dependence upon the living God. But we live under a discipline of the indefinite. At no time can we afford to take our ease or to conduct ourselves as if some interval of exemption were guaranteed to us. There are indeed occasions when we feel justified in practically saying to ourselves, though we would not say it openly, that it is not quite so necessary to be spiritually minded or to be concerned about ourselves. In one sense, that is true enough. Life does vary in momentousness. The days are not equally grave, and the pressure now and then is certainly relaxed. But who does not know that the most momentous and critical seasons have often turned out

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to be those in which we expected little or nothing to happen? Who can fail to note on almost every other page of history and experience a warning against false security? It is the peril of the second watch, when we are apt to relax our vigilance because we expect nothing to happen and because it is particularly difficult to cherish any other kind of expectation.

Something does happen, in many cases. It may take the form of temptation, for example. The power of temptation depends largely on the condition in which it finds us. Any-one who has been slackening the practice of prayer or accustoming himself to insidious habits of self-indulgence and inconsistency, is apt

to fail at the critical moment, and his failure reaches back to previous laxity in his personal religion. He is not ready, when a sudden test falls upon his faculties. Horace Walpole notes that during the American revolution *By now  
Collo = Be* the citizens of Boston raised a special army of sixteen thousand men, who were called 'minute-men,' because they were to be ready for active service at a moment's notice. The safety of our religious character is in being 'minute-men,' who cannot be surprised by any sudden onset of temptation. For certain spaces it looks as if we could do pretty much as we pleased with ourselves. No symptom of danger is visible on the horizon. Everything invites us to indolence and indulgence, and for

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the time being it seems as if it did not much matter what we did, since we can be sure of bracing ourselves in ample time for any unforeseen emergency. How differently things often turn out! While some temptations, like icebergs in the North Atlantic, betray their approach by a lowering of the moral temperature long before they come in sight, others leave us hardly any time for precautions. No presentiment of trouble appears in our environment. We began the day, imagining we could anticipate what would happen along the uneventful and familiar line of duty, and—in a flash—the thing was on us with its sudden, searching thrust. We were caught by the temptation to falsehood or passion,

caught and overborne; before we could pull ourselves together, the word was out of our lips, the deed was done. We don't always get time to summon our scattered powers of honour, faith, and self-control. No, that rallying of the soul should have been done already. But whenever the spirit of prayer has been relaxed, the soul lies inevitably a prey to the onsets of temptation, for prayer is the exercise and expression of our dependence upon the living God, and its failure means that we have been putting our interests and aims before His, or relying, in a short-sighted pride, upon our wisdom and capacities. *What I say to you I say to all, Watch.*

It is the same with opportunities.

They do not always announce themselves beforehand. They may surprise us during the second watch, and nothing is more easy than to miss them by being unknit and loose and careless. Everything depends on moral promptness. And you can't improvise promptness. There is no time for that. The rich occasion must find you on the alert, sustaining your vows and renewing your consecration, ready to take advantage of any chance which suddenly comes within your reach. But how can that be if you are letting yourself go, under the subtle influences of your surroundings, when the temperature of aspiration is cooled and the strict order of the Christian life disorganised? People do let themselves

go. They recollect moving hours of faith behind them, and they expect manifestations of grace in a future morning-hour, but the present seems a flat and dull interval when it is useless to suppose that anything momentous can be expected or achieved. So their discipline deteriorates. Yet it is only by maintaining a temper of keenness and self-denial and prayer during this second watch that men and women can equip themselves for any opportunity that may arrive sooner or later. Wordsworth describes his Happy Warrior as one

'Whose powers shed round him in the common  
strife,  
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,  
A constant influence, a peculiar grace ;  
But who, if he be called upon to face

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Some awful moment to which Heaven has  
joined  
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,  
Is happy as a lover and attired  
With sudden brightness as a man inspired.'

The crisis always brings an inspiration of its own. Such moments stimulate the mental and the moral powers of any man who faces their demand. But only if he has already been careful to exercise that 'constant influence' of an alert, conscientious spirit upon the unromantic tasks of ordinary life. It is vain to count upon the 'sudden brightness,' as if that would invest any one in a given emergency. The heightening of the mind, the clarifying of the judgment, the reinforcement of the will, which frequently mark a man's experience at some crucial point, are

simply the result and the reward of undeviating faithfulness during the common days beforehand.

Life has many phases which correspond to the second watch of the night, when it is particularly difficult to maintain personal religion, or at least when there is less help than usual in our environment against the inertia which threatens to overpower the spiritual sense. Personal religion never can afford to depend very much upon the aid of circumstances or the tone of contemporary life, but at times there is hardly anything to encourage it, or to whet the sense of our relation to the unseen Lord. Undisturbed prosperity, a period of moral reaction, or uncongenial surroundings, may deaden almost every

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incentive to the practice of the spiritual life, till the atmosphere becomes heavy and drowsy. Though it is always a temptation to take life into our own hands, there are special periods when the feeling of responsibility to God perceptibly wanes, and when we imagine it is not only possible but legitimate to shrink from hardship and to attend to our personal tasks and ambitions as if these were of primary importance. Christ recalls us from such errors to that consciousness of a bond which stamps the Christian vocation. His words summon us to live simply and naturally as in the unseen presence of One who has the right to control us, and to set us tasks which run counter to our natural inclinations.

The test of our discipleship is: Where do the calls of God find us? In what attitude do the surprises of life discover us when they break into our experience? There is an old saying of Christ, which was current in the early church, to this effect: *In whatsoever things I find you, by these will I judge you.* The Lord is repeatedly coming to men and judging them thus. Men and women are found by the opportunities of the moral life, and where they are found is their judgment. Their seriousness or their carelessness, their obedience or their self-will, their temper of devotion to the Lord's interests, or their self-indulgence, that is what stamps their quality. The significance of such critical moments lies

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not so much in themselves—they are often comparatively obscure or even trivial—as in us, in the condition where God finds us. What determines success or failure before God is not what we dreamed of doing, not any hasty resolve at the last minute to make up for lost time, but the position in which we are overtaken, the sort of interests which we have been allowing to engage our minds and to control our energies.

To make this more vivid, think for a moment of the parable.

‘The lesson of the twilight  
Is as simple as ‘tis deep ;  
Acquiescence, acquiescence,  
And the coming on of sleep.’

Well, it is twilight here. Slowly, when the second watch has begun,

the lights go out in all the other houses, one by one. The hush of the night falls on the city. On this side and on that men are sleeping, as nature bids them after the long day. But these servants have to keep awake, and why? Simply because there is one living in the city who has a supreme claim on them, a claim for which everything else must be set aside. His absence explains their vigil. He will be disappointed if they fail him, and they care intensely for his approval. They neither see him nor do they understand why they are kept up so long. But they are servants, and he is their lord. They pace the corridors, look out of the windows, and listen to each footfall, remembering his injunctions

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and eager to catch the sound of his return.

Which things, says Jesus, are a parable. The attitude of the Christian is not explained by the environment which accounts for the ordinary life of men. It is not always helped by its surroundings. Its meaning lies in relationship to an unseen Lord and in something that has passed between the Lord and His servants.

*I afraid of being unitd narrow, diff't fr. others.* His word must stand against the world's. The second watch is a test of our devotion to Him and to His interests, just because it bids our nature acquiesce in our surroundings. When it is most difficult to keep the faculties of trust and obedience alive, when it seems only natural to permit ourselves a little negligence or to do as other people are doing—then our

personal religion is put to the proof, and it is found out whether that religion is anything better than a sudden flash of earnestness caught from congenial surroundings or the casual, half-imitative excitement of the soul which a stirring season of religious fervour may produce. To wait for the Lord, or upon the Lord, is not difficult amid the sounds and sights of the first watch. That is a comparatively easy period, when good impressions are made and devotion is as yet an impulse. But the impulse soon gets tested, and if it is no more than a fitful impulse which has stirred the feelings but never worked itself down into the will and enabled us to break if need be with accepted views and habits, it dies down in the course of the second watch, when the

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initial stimulus is gone and when life is thrown back upon the sheer power of believing, by means of reverence and self-denial, in the unseen Lord. Our behaviour then is an unerring clue to what we consider the supreme reality in life. For what do we take most trouble and brace ourselves to make most effort? Is it appearances? Is it what we feel and touch and see, the obvious interests and standards of our world? Or is it the control of One whose we are and whom we serve, the consciousness of our bond to Him and of His claim on us? The one asks only that we acquiesce in the spirit of the hour. The other calls on us to master our random thoughts and natural inclinations.

For those who may have to stand

the second watch, the word is: Rally your sense of being trusted by God. You are not your own, though things seem to tell you that you are, and that you cannot be blamed for doing as those near you do. The meaning of your life to-day as well as yesterday lies nowhere but in your relation to Another's will. Only that accounts for you. Tell yourself over and again that you are still under orders, and that you must put a constraint upon your inclinations. Light the lamps of duty, self-control, prayer, and love, and keep them burning through the dark hours of the watch. Say to yourself:

'That which I chose, I choose ;  
That which I willed, I will ;  
That which I once refused, I still refuse.  
That which I chose and choose  
And will is Jesus' will.'

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It is such quiet concentration, such an undersense of the Lord's will, that sustains our personal religion through the dead seasons. Who knows what decision he may be summoned to make or what chance he may have of proving his quality, before all is over? The issues of temptation and opportunity lie beyond our control, the hour of them, the form of them. But this at least is within our reach : to pace up and down through the long watch with a steady faith and an undeviating, alert obedience to what we know of the Lord's mind, so that no emergency shall find us quite unprepared to do whatever may be His will or to bear it.

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